

See No Strange: A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love

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You are a part of me I do not yet know. (7) Joy rushes in. Long after the moment passes, we can choose to remember the truth of interconnectedness, that we belong to one another. We can choose to “see no strange.” (9)

Wonder is the wellspring for love. It is easy to wonder about the internal life of the people closest to us. It is harder to wonder about people who seem like stranger or outsiders. But when we choose to wonder about people we don’t know, when we imagine their lives and listen for their stories, we begin to expand the circle of those we see as part of us. We prepare ourselves to love beyond what evolution requires. (11)

The failure to wonder is the beginning of violence. Disables their ability for empathy. Entire institutions built to preserve the interests of one group of people over another depend on this failure of imagination. (12)

Love is dangerous business. Love people, even when they do not love you. You must wonder about them even when they refuse to wonder about you. You must even protect them when they are in harm’s way. (13)

Love and labor were inseparable. Love called forth the deepest bravery. (14)

When one of us does something bad, we tend to attribute it to circumstance, but when one of them does the same, we attribute it to essence. We think of us as complex and multidimensional; we tend to think of them as one-dimensional. (17)

The margin can be a space of strength. (18) Sacred spaces are extensions of our own bodies, and when they are violated, our bodies hurt from the inside. (41)

Grief is the price of love. Loving someone means that one day, there will be grieving. They will leave you, or you will leave them. The more you love, the more you grieve. Loving someone also means grieving with them. It means letting their pain and loss bleed into your own heart. (43)

When we are brave enough to sit with our pain, it deepens our ability to sit with the pain of others. It shows us how to love them. Telling the story is the prerequisite to justice. But for the story to matter, someone we trust must be listening. (44)

For the warrior-sage, the fight is not just a means to an end. The fight is a way of being in the world, an ongoing labor of love. (94)

Since multiple inequalities determine our power and privilege and lived experience in society, these inequalities must be fought together, by all of us. Otherwise, we fail our movements and ourselves. What does it mean to be warrior-sage for a new time? Who will you fight for? What will you risk? It begins with honoring the fight impulse in you. How will you channel that into something that delivers life instead of death? Breathe. Think. Then choose your sword and shield. You don’t have to know the answers. You just have to be ready for the moment when the world says: Now. (97)

The opposite of love is not rage. The opposite of love is indifference. Love engages all our emotions. Joy is the gift of love. Grief is the price of love. Anger is the force that protects that which is loved. We cannot access the depth of loving ourselves or others without our rage. (107)

Home is the space within us and between us where we feel safe - and brave. It is not a physical space as much as it is a field of being. (127)

The moment we see their wounds, they no longer have absolute power over us. I could not see the wound in them until I ended the wound inside me. And that required me to access my rage. The solution is not to suppress our rage or let it explode, but to process our rage in safe containers – emotional spaces safe enough to suppress our body's impulses without shame and without harming ourselves or others. Only when we give rage an external expression outside our bodies can we be in relationship with it. We can then ask: What information does my rage carry? What is telling me? How do I want to harness this energy? (131)

Can we see our own rage as animal and divine? Divine rage is fierce, disciplined, and visionary. The aim of divine rage is not vengeance but to reorder the world. It is precise and purposeful. (133)

When is it my role to listen? (140) Deep listening is an act of surrender. We risk being changed by what we hear. (143) We might believe we are listening, but we have journeyed only half of the circle. We have drawn close to the story and lost ourselves in another's experience, but we haven't returned to ourselves and asked: What does this demand of me? (144)

The purpose of listening across lines of difference is not agreement or compromise. It is understanding. Trust understanding is not possible unless we risk changing our worldview. Otherwise, we think we have built bridges to one another, but the only bridges are rooted in sands that can shift with the tide. Solidarity is only possible if we are brave enough to reckon with the past and the past shapes the present. (148)

There is no reconciliation without truth. (151) The goal of listening is not to feel empathy for our opponents, or validate their ideas, or even change their mind in the moment. Our goal is to understand them. (156) I think of an earnest question and try to stay curious long enough to be changed by what I hear. Listening does not grant the other side legitimacy. It grants them humanity – and preserves our own. (157)

We must not become what we are fighting. We can't solve a problem we don't have the courage to name. (160) Love is not an exchange economy. (164)

Ask the right questions, "hear you into being", and draw out your imagination. (176)

Love is an act of will. (193) Social change is only possible when communities are able to mobilize and tell stories that reclaim our imagination. (196) The way we make change is just as important as the change we make. (197)

This was not about the future at all. This was about a state of being in the present moment, as if now is all there is. Now and now and now and now. It is moving from Moment with a capital M to Moment with a capital M. this is a state of joyfulness inside the struggle – an energy that keeps us in motion, a breathing that keeps us laboring, even inside the pain of labor. Hope is a feeling that

waxes and wanes, sometimes brilliant and luminous, sometimes a faint sliver in the sky, sometimes gone completely. No matter how hopeful or hopeless we feel, we can choose to return to the labor anyway. Sometimes we receive the gift of our labor. Sometimes we do not. But it does not matter. Because when we labor in love, labor is not only a means but an end in itself. (241)

I had become accustomed to breathlessness. You don't have to make yourself suffer in order to serve. You don't have to grind your bones into the ground. You don't have to cut your life up into pieces and give yourself away until there is nothing left. You belong to a community and a broader movement. Your life has value. We need you alive. We need you to last. You will not last if you are not breathing. (247)

“When we see something that beautiful, we call it breathtaking, but we really should call it breath giving. Because when suffering constricts the heart, awe stretches it back out, making us more compassionate, more loving, more present.” – Rabbi Sharon Brous. (248)

Loving ourselves is frontline social justice work. Audre Lorde said, “Caring for myself is not an act of self-indulgence, it is self-preservation, and that is an act of political warfare.” And bell hooks wrote, “I have seen that we cannot fully create effective movements for social change if individuals struggling for that change are also not self-actualized or working towards that end.” Without loving ourselves, our other efforts to love fail. Loving ourselves happens in community. (248)

The terms “self-care” implies that caring for ourselves is a private, individual act, that we need only to detach ourselves from our web of relationships and spend our resources on respite or pampering. Think in rhythms. What can you do every day? Every week? Every month? Every year? (249)

Just terrified that I would no longer have worth if I shifted from doing to being. I have grown so accustomed to the breathlessness of crises that paying to my own breath in my body was the new frightening thing. It was time to find the bravery to surrender my ego and equip others to lead. (250)

Talking about our emotional trauma doesn't necessarily alter our relationship with it. (259) Healing does not mean the end to suffering: It meant that freedom to return home, again and again, to our bodies and to one another. (261)

Perhaps our task is to honor all the different ways people relate to forgiveness. (263)

Reconciliation means what has been torn asunder, but it does not return us to a point before the harm happened. (265)